



FALCO MELANOGENYS: Gould.

J. E. Gould del. et lith.

C. Hallman del. Imp.

# FALCO MELANOGENYS, *Gould.*

## Black-cheeked Falcon.

*Falco Peregrinus*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 183.

*Falco melanogenys*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 139; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.

*Blue Hawk*, Colonists of Western Australia.

*Wolga*, Aborigines of New South Wales.

*Gwet-ul-bur*, Aborigines of the mountain and lowland districts of Western Australia.

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THE present bird, like the *F. hypoleucus*, may be classed among the noble Falcons, being closely allied both to the Peregrine of Europe and the Duck-Hawk of North America, to both of which it assimilates also in its bold and rapacious habits, a character which renders it a favourite with the Aborigines, who admire it for its courage in attacking and conquering birds much larger than itself. Like its American congener it preys eagerly upon ducks, and Mr. Gilbert informs me that he has seen it attack and carry off the *Nyroca Australis*, a species at least half as heavy again as itself. Thus we find in this Falcon a bird well adapted for the sport of Falconry, which though fallen into disuse in Europe, may at some future time be revived in this new and rising country, since its lagoons and water-courses are well stocked with herons and cranes, and its vast plains are admirably suited to such pastime. The introduction of hounds for the purpose of chasing the native dog (Dingo) and the Kangaroo has already taken place in Australia, and perhaps it is not too much to look forward to the time when the noble science of Falconry shall be resorted to by the colonists. A finer mews of birds could not be formed in any country than in Australia, with such typical Falcons as the *F. hypoleucus*, *F. melanogenys* and *F. frontatus*.

The present bird is universally dispersed over the whole southern portion of Australia, including Van Diemen's Land, and probably future research will discover that its range extends over all parts of the continent. It gives preference to steep rocky cliffs, and the sides of precipitous gullies, rather than to fertile and woodland districts, but especially seeks such rocky localities as are washed by the sea, or are in the neighbourhood of inland lakes and rivers. In such situations it dwells in pairs throughout the year, much after the manner of the Peregrine. Its nest is placed in those parts of the rocks that are most precipitous and inaccessible. The eggs are two in number; their ground-colour is buff, but which is scarcely perceptible from the predominance of the blotching of deep reddish chestnut, with which it is marbled all over; they are two inches and one line long, by one inch and seven and a half lines broad.

The stomach is large and membranous; and the food consists of birds, principally of the Duck tribe.

The sexes present the usual difference in size, the male being considerably smaller than the female, as will be seen in the accompanying illustration.

The male has the head, cheeks, and back of the neck deep brownish black; the feathers of the upper surface, wings and tail alternately crossed with equal-sized bands of deep grey and blackish brown; outer edges of the primaries uniform blackish brown, their inner webs obscurely barred with light buff; throat and chest delicate fawn-colour, passing into reddish grey on the abdomen; tail-feathers ornamented with an oval-shaped spot of dark brown; abdomen, flanks, under surface of the wing, and under tail-coverts reddish grey, crossed by numerous irregular bars of blackish brown; bill light bluish lead-colour at the tip, becoming much lighter at the base; cere, legs and feet yellow; claws black.

The female differs from the male in being larger in all her proportions, and in having the throat and chest more richly tinted with fulvous, which colour also extends over the abdomen, the feathers of which are not so strongly barred with brown as in the male.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.